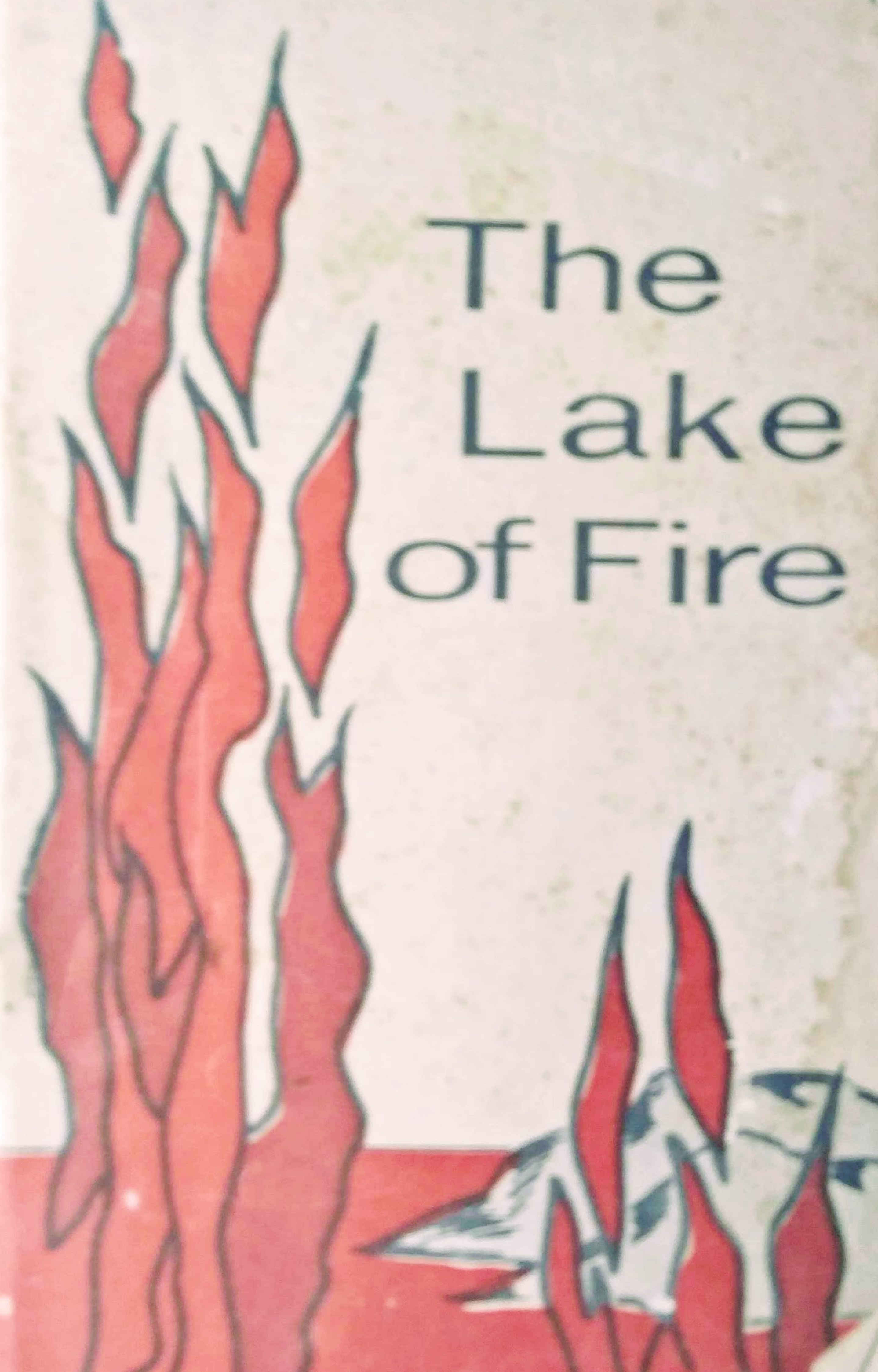
The Lake of Fire



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LAKE OF FIRE

BY HOMER DUNCAN

THE LAKE OF FIRE

Hell is a lake burning with fire and brimstone. The Bible teaches that all who are out of Christ will spend eternity in this awful place. Since this is the most terrible thought to enter the human mind, the natural man revolts against it.

Modernistic theologians say, "The medieval picture of Hell as a place of flaming torment which held the minds of men for some generations is inadequate. God, angel or man would not be happy in Heaven if a single human being was suffering in Hell. God is too loving and merciful to send any of His creatures to eternal punishment."

Universalist Nels Ferre writes, "Eternal Hell is naturally out of the question both as sub-justice and sub-love. No human judge has a right to inflict infinite punishment for finite transgression.

"The very conception of an eternal Hell is monstrous and an insult to the conception of last things in other religions, not to mention the Christian doctrine of God's sovereign love. Such a doctrine would either make God a tyrant,

where any human Hitler would be a third-degree saint, and the concentration camps of human torture, the King's picnic grounds. That such a doctrine could be conceived, not to mention believed, shows how far from any understanding of the love of God many people once were and, alas, still are."

The cults reject the Bible doctrine of Hell. Christian Science teaches that no final judgment awaits man, and that Hell fire is the ravings and imagination of mortal error. The Jehovah Witnesses teach that it is absurd to suppose that God would perpetuate existence forever in torment. They teach that the second death is extinction. Seventh Day Adventists teach that sinners will go to Hell, but that they will be annihilated after a thousand years.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

But in spite of all that man may say, the teachings of the Bible are clear. If we accept the Bible as being the Word of God, we must accept what it teaches about Hell. Those who do not believe in

Hell emphasize that God is too good and too loving to send men to Hell, but the same Bible that tells us of the love of God also tells us of the holiness of God. If God did not punish sin, He would not be holy. The terribleness of Hell shows the awfulness of sin.

Let us look at a few of the references in the Bible where Hell is mentioned.

"For a fire is kindled in my anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell" (Deut. 32:22). "Hell is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering" (Job 26:6). "Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell" (Psalms 55:15). "Hell and destruction are never full" (Prov. 27:20). "Hell hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure" (Isaiah 5:14). Ezekiel said, "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell" (Ezek. 32:21). "Though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up into heaven, thence will I bring them down" (Amos 9: 2). "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to

be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4).

The Lord Jesus Christ taught more about Hell than all the other writers of the Bible put together. He told the city of Capernaum that because of its sin, it would be brought down to Hell (Matt. 11:23). He said, "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:47, 48). He called the Pharisees a generation of vipers and said, "How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" (Matt. 23:33). He said, "The rich man died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes being in torments" (Luke 16:22, 23). In the day of judgment, Christ will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels---and these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:41, 46).

In view of the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ concerning Hell, we are faced with four alternatives: (1). That He was sincere, but mistaken in what He believed about Hell; (2). That He was a

deceiver and an imposter seeking to gain followers by putting the fear of Hell into their hearts; (3). That in the teachings about Hell He did not intend for us to interpret His teaching in a literal sense, but in a spiritual sense; or (4). That Christ meant what He said, and that He said what He meant when He taught about Hell. Only unbelievers can accept either of the first two alternatives.

In making the decision as to which of the last two alternatives is correct, the student of the Scriptures must consider three things: (1). That the tone of Christ's teaching strongly indicates that Hell is a literal place; (2). In deciding whether or not Hell is a literal place, we must not only consider the love of God but also the holiness of God. God would not be holy and just if He did not punish sin; and (3). That the severity of the punishment indicates the seriousness of the consequences of sin.

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "HELL"

The word "Hell" is found fifty-four times in the King James version of the Bible. Thirty-one times it is a transla-

tion of the Hebrew word "sheol;" ten times of the Greek word "hades;" twelve times of the Greek word "gehenna;" and once of the Greek word "tartarus." Language scholars tell us that the Hebrew word "sheol" and the Greek word "hades" are identical in meaning.

In the Old Testament the word "sheol" is translated "grave" thirty-one times and is translated "hell" thirty-one times. Since this is true, those who do not believe in a literal Hell tell us that in every case the word "sheol" should have been translated "grave;" therefore Hell is nothing more than the grave. In several cases it is true that where "sheol" has been translated "hell," it could have been translated "grave." However in other cases the context and the way the word "sheol" is used in the sentence clearly shows that it refers to a place of punishment and not merely to the grave. Let us look at some of these passages.

Solomon warns against wicked women by saying, "Her house is the way to hell" (Prov. 7:27); and "her guests are in the depths of hell" (Prov. 9:18). When Solomon used the word "sheol," he

evidently was speaking of some place other than the grave, for all men both good and bad go to the grave. He was warning immoral men, not that they would die and be placed in the grave, but that they would be punished in Hell for their sins.

Solomon gives us this advice, "Thou shalt beat him (thy son) with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell" (Prov. 23:14). It is very plain that Solomon is here referring to something besides the grave, because no matter how much a rebellious son may be beaten, he will die and go to the grave, and no amount of beating will bring a person out of the grave, but the wise chastening of a loving father may be a means used of God to keep the wayward son from going to Hell.

The word "hades" is found in the New Testament eleven times. Ten times it is translated "hell" and once "grave" ("O death, where is thy sting? O grave (hades) where is thy victory?"---I Cor. 15:55). Should the word "hades" have been translated "grave" in every case? We think not. When Jesus warned the city of Capernaum that it would be

brought down to hades and that it would suffer more severe punishment than the city of Sodom (Matt. 11:23, 24). He was speaking of some place other than the grave, because the Apostle Jude said the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha were then suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 7).

When Jesus said that a certain rich man died and was buried and in hades, he lifted up his eyes being in torment, He evidently was speaking of some place beside the grave, because there are no torments in the grave. People who are in the grave do not lift up their eyes nor do they remember things that happened before they died. Men try to get around this story by telling us that it was a parable, but the Bible does not say it was a parable. Instead of Luke saying as he often did, "He spoke a parable unto them saying----," Jesus said, "A certain rich man----," showing that He had a certain rich man in mind as He spoke.

The Greek word "gehenna" is twelve times translated by our English word "Hell." Those who do not believe in Hell tell us that gehenna merely meant the

place of burning outside the city of Jerusalem; that it was the place where all of the trash and refuse was burned. Once again let us study these references and see if this interpretation is what Jesus meant when He used the word "gehenna."

Jesus said that if we called our brother a fool, we would be in danger of Hell (gehenna) fire (Matt. 5:22). It is foolish to say that He was warning men that they would be burned on the rubbish heap outside of the city; for there is no record that one was ever burned in this way.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that we should fear God rather than men, for man may kill our body, but only God can cast into Hell (gehenna). If Jesus was referring to the place of burning outside of the city of Jerusalem in Matthew 10:28 and Luke 12:5, He could not be teaching us to fear God, because men would have had the power to cast into the place of burning, but only God can cast into Hell (gehenna).

To emphasize the terribleness of Hell Jesus taught that if our eye offends us, we should pluck it out rather than be cast into Hell; that if our hand or foot

offend us, we should cut them off rather than be cast into Hell (Matt. 18:9; Mark 9:45-48).

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees by calling them serpents and a generation of vipers and asked them how they could escape the damnation of Hell (Matt. 23:33). If gehenna is nothing more than a place of burning rubbish outside of the city, how can it be connected with damnation?

One time in II Peter 2:4 the word "tartarus" is translated Hell. It comes from the verb tartaroo which means to incarcerate.

THE DESCRIPTION OF HELL

To be consistent in our thinking, if we believe that Heaven is a literal place, we must also believe that Hell is a literal place. The Bible teaches that both Heaven and Hell are literal places. The Bible speaks of the lowest Hell (Deut. 32:22; Psalm 86:13). David spoke of making his bed in Hell (Psalm 139:8). Isaiah predicts that Satan will be brought down to Hell (Isaiah 14:15). Ezekiel speaks of being cast down to Hell and of

going down into Hell (Ezekiel 31:16, 17).

Repeatedly in the Scriptures Hell is connected with fire or with burning. Jesus called it Hell fire (Matt. 5:22; 18:9). He spoke of it as a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50). Five times Hell is called "the lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8).

The story of the rich man in Hell shows that Hell is a place of consciousness (Luke 16:23, 24). It is a place of suffering (Jude 7), a place of pain (Psalm 116:3), a place of torment (Luke 16:24, 25, 28), a place of wrath (Eph. 2:3; Col. 3:6), and a place of eternal damnation (Mark 3:29).

Hell is a place of remembrance. Abraham told the rich man to remember the good things that he enjoyed while living on the earth. The rich man remembered his five brothers that were on the earth. The sinner will remember his past sins without being able to indulge in them. He will remember the many opportunities he had of accepting Christ. He will remember the prayers and pleadings of godly parents. He will remember hearing many Gospel sermons. He will remember the wooings and striv-

ings of the Spirit of God. He will remember every time he rejected Christ.

Hell is not only a place of remembrance, but it is also a place of remorse. The sinner's soul will be filled with the deepest remorse over every sin he committed. In Hell he will realize the folly of having sold his soul for a mess of pottage. He will be filled with remorse for having spurned the love of God and for having rejected the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hell is not a place of annihilation. Those who do not believe in Hell quote, "and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. 20:14) to prove that Hell will be destroyed. But they must pervert the clear teaching of many other Scriptures to reach this conclusion. If I have in my hand a stick that is burning with fire, and I cast it into a huge bonfire, they will both burn together. The Bible clearly teaches that the fire of Hell is eternal. In Revelation 19:20 we read that Anti-christ and the False Prophet were both cast alive into the lake burning with fire and brimstone. These two are men who have sold themselves to

serve Satan. They are not destroyed or burned up in the lake of fire but are still burning in Hell a thousand years later when the devil is cast into Hell (Rev. 20:10).

Hell is a place of eternal torment. Jesus said that in the day of judgment the King will say to those who are on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:46). Jesus said that Hell was a place where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44, 46, 48).

During the Great Tribulation those who receive the mark of the beast "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever: and they had no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark

of his name" (Rev. 14:9-11).

We live in a day when some filthy-minded men who call themselves ministers of the Gospel tolerate and encourage the sin of sodomy (men with men working that which is unseemly--compare Romans 1:27 with Romans 1:18). They teach that God is too good to punish sin, but the Bible teaches that the inhabitants of Sodom (from whence we get the name Sodomy) and Gomorrha are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire (Jude 7).

There is not one single line of Scripture in all of the Holy Bible that teaches that men will be given a second chance once they have gone to Hell. Criminals often escape from penitentiaries and prison camps, but the Bible clearly teaches that no one will escape from Hell once they go there.

WHO WILL BE IN HELL

The Devil will be in Hell, for it was prepared for him and his angels (Matt. 25:41). He will be cast into Hell at the close of the Millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20:10). The angels that rebelled

with Satan are now bound in chains awaiting the judgment of that great day (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). The Beast or the Anti-christ (also called the man of sin and the son of perdition) is a Satan-possessed man that will rule over the whole world during the period of the Great Tribulation. He will be cast into Hell at the end of the Tribulation (Rev. 19:20). The False Prophet, a pseudo-christian religious leader (likely the head of the ecumenical church) will also be cast into Hell at that time.

No one will be saved during the Great Tribulation who has heard the Gospel before that time (2 Thess. 2:10, 11). The ones who are saved during this period will seal their testimony with their own blood (Rev. 7:14). Most of the people who live on the earth during this terrible time will receive the mark of the beast so that they can buy and sell (Rev. 13:16, 17), and all who receive the mark of the beast "shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the pres-

ence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14:10, 11).

The Bible says, "The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17). What a picture of America! The wicked are called by name many places in the Bible. Study carefully the first chapter of Romans to see those against whom the wrath of God is revealed. Many people think that because they are members of the church or because they have made a profession of being a Christian, they will be sure of Heaven when they die, but the Bible says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9, 10). Paul wrote to the church at Ephesus, "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor

unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (Eph. 5:5, 6). The glorified Christ said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:6-8).

We shall do well to note that it is not only the wicked, ungodly, vile and loathsome sinner who will go to Hell, but that all who are out of Christ will go there (I Cor. 15:22; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Matt. 7:13, 14).

All unbelievers are going to Hell (Rev. 21:8; John 3:18, 36). An intellectual acknowledgment of certain facts will not save our soul. The faith that

saves must be a heart belief that will change and transform the life (Acts 8:37; Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; 2 Cor. 5:17).

Many lost people who believe what the Bible teaches about Hell do not believe that they are bad enough to go there. Very often when seeking to win such people to Christ, I ask them, "If you should die tonight, would you go to Heaven or Hell?" It is very seldom that I meet a person who believes that he is bad enough to go to Hell.

WHEN DO SINNERS GO TO HELL?

The Bible teaches that when a Christian dies, his soul and spirit go immediately to be with the Lord. We are "absent from the body, and present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8). When a sinner dies, his soul and spirit go immediately to Hell. Jesus said, "The rich man died and was buried and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment" (Luke 16:22, 23). There is not one line of Scripture that teaches soul sleep, nor is there one line of Scripture upon which the Roman Catholics can base their false doctrine of purgatory. Purgatory, like

most of their other doctrines, is an invention of this false church. They reason that no man is good enough to go to Heaven when he dies, and that no man is bad enough to go to Hell when he dies, and they therefore invent purgatory as an intermediate place to prepare the sinner for Heaven. This, of course, clearly shows that they do not understand the nature of the atonement. They do not know that Christ "purged" the sinner's sins when He died in his place and stead on the Cross.

GOD DOES NOT WANT YOU TO GO TO HELL

Dear friend, God loves you and wants to save you. He is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his ways and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" (Ezekiel 33:11). God wants to save every lost person in the whole world, but He cannot save any one when they are in rebellion

against Him. An essential part of salvation is that the heart of the sinner be turned from wickedness and rebellion to worship and adoration.

God proved His love for you and for the whole world by giving His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on Calvary's Cross in your place and stead. In the giving of His Son, God made a wonderful provision whereby every person can be saved through Christ. The word "Gospel" means "good news." The "good news" is that while you and I were sinners, lost, undone, and headed for a Devil's Hell, Christ died for our sins (I Cor. 15:3). He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (I Peter 3:18). He bare our sins in His own body on the tree (I Peter 2:24). He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21). God is holy and just. He cannot and He will not make Christ pay for our sins and make us pay for them too. But if we are to be saved, we must accept the pardon that God freely offers to all.

The first point of the Gospel is that Christ has died for our sins. The sec-

ond is that He was buried that He by the grace of God might taste of death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). The third part of the Gospel is that Christ was raised again on the third day. Every sinner has two basic needs. (1). He needs to have his sins forgiven so that he can be reconciled to God; and (2). since he is dead in trespasses and sins, he needs everlasting life. The sinner is forgiven of his sins and is reconciled to God through the death of Christ. He is born again by the Spirit of God and receives everlasting life by receiving the living Christ into his heart.

TWO WAYS

Two ways are before you: the way of Christ or the broad road that leads to destruction. Two destinations are before you: Heaven or Hell. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:13, 14).

May I kindly ask if you now have eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ, or are you on the broad road that leads to destruction? There is no middle ground. Either you are lost or you are saved. This issue will not be settled some day in the future, but it will be settled right now by what you do with Christ. If you accept Him, you are saved; if you reject Him, you are lost. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life" (I John 5:12). "He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). All who believe on Christ now have everlasting life and will not come into condemnation or judgment (John 5:24). There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). "Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2).

Suppose that some evening you are seated quietly in your home when suddenly someone loudly bangs on your door and cries, "Your house is on fire!" What would you do? Would you continue

to sit idly and say, "That is the cry of some foolish alarmist." No, any intelligent person would at least investigate to see whether or not the alarm was true or false. Many times when I am seeking to win a sinner to Christ, I have said to them, "You have more sense than to light a match and hold your finger in the flame, but you are foolishly taking the chance of spending eternity burning in the lake of fire and brimstone."

Dear friend, the decision is up to you. The Lord Jesus now stands knocking at your heart's door (Rev. 3:20). He wants to forgive you of all of your sins. He wants to make you a child of God. If you will ask Him to come into your heart, He will come in. If you come to Him, He will not cast you out (John 6:37).

Perhaps you are thinking, "How can I do this?" May I suggest that you pray a simple prayer something like this, "Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and that I need a Savior. I believe that you are the Son of God, and that you died on the Cross for my sins. I believe that you were buried, and that you rose from the dead on the third day. I now invite you to come into my heart

to be my Savior and my Lord. I thank you for saving me, for Thy Name's sake. Amen."

We are justified by faith and not by feeling (Romans 3:28; 5:1). Since you have invited Jesus to come into your heart, believe that He has come in. As you believe in Him and walk with Him, He will become real to you in your daily experience.

There are several things that you should begin to do as a new Christian: the most important of these is to daily read the Bible.

Let us send you a copy of our free booklet "Going on with God" to help you get started in the Christian life.

"But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

HELL

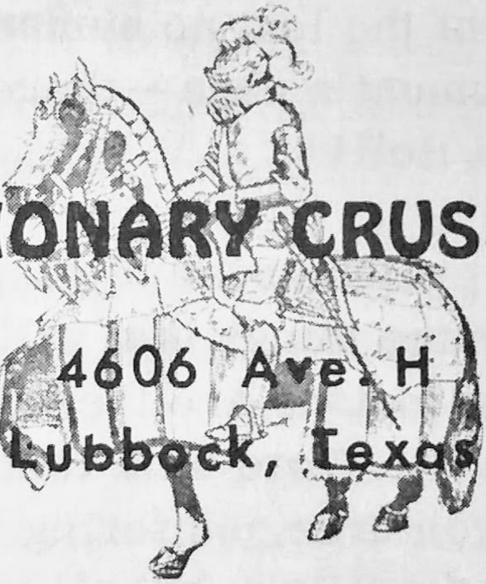
Hell! The prison house of despair,
Here are some things that won't be
there:

No flowers will bloom on the banks of
Hell,
No beauties of nature we love so well;
No comforts of home, music and song,
No friendship of joy will be found in that
throng;
No children to brighten the long weary
night;
No loving smile in that region of night;
No mercy, no pity, pardon nor grace.
No water, O God, what a terrible place!
The pangs of the lost no human can tell,
Not one moment's ease — there is no
rest in Hell!

Hell! The prison house of despair,
Here are some things that will be there:
Fire and brimstone are there we know,
For God in His Word hath told us so:
Memory, remorse, suffering and pain,
Weeping and wailing, but all in vain;
Blasphemers, swearers, haters of God,
Christ-rejectors while here on earth
trod;
Murderers, gamblers, drunkards and
liars,
Will have their part in the lake of fires;
The filthy, the vile, the cruel and mean,
What a horrible mob in Hell will be seen!

Yes, more than humans on earth can
tell
Are the torments and woes of eternal
Hell!

—Author Unknown



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